In Memoriam

Harold E. Sterne

*Enthusiastic Letterpress
Printer, A Good Friend,
Long-Time APA Member*

By Richard L. Hopkins

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Hill & Dale Private Press
and Typefoundry
Terra Alta, West Virginia

Hal Sterne, APA 502, another of the "old guard of APA," died October 2, 2010, at the age of 81. His passing cannot go unnoticed by this, another "old guard member," for Hal's friendship over the years is a great example of the relationships which APA has given to me—relationships which have profoundly affected my life and certainly my development as a printer.

I don't remember when I first met Hal, but I do remember Hal when he was still at the M. Rosenthal printing company in Cincinnati. This was a huge, long-established firm and Hal was pretty far up in the chain of command, his last title being vice president of manufacturing. Yet he was eager to talk with me and give good advice as I started my own commercial printing venture. On occasion he would call me with some sort of question—he always was ready to answer mine.

At a Wayzgoose long-ago, Hal and I got in a corner and he expounded on his

"West Virginia connection." It turns out he was a graduate of the once-great printing management program at West Virginia Institute of Technology, located at Montgomery, W. Va., which is my wife's hometown and a place I became familiar with over the years while visiting Lynda's late parents. Hal's interest in printing was sparked at the age of 14 when he acquired his first press. Hal's first job after graduation was running a Linotype machine at the weekly newspaper in Sutton, W. Va., also familiar to me. Hal bounced between several small newspaper operations before he moved into commercial printing. He was with the Rosenthal organization many years and it was obvious to me that Hal Stern "knew his stuff" in the world of offset and phototypesetting, yet he retained a keen interest in the traditions of letterpress and kept his own shop at home so he could continue to get ink on his hands—and maintain his APA membership.

Hal published three significant books relating to old-time printing: *Catalogue of Nineteenth Century Printing Presses* and & *Catalogue of Nineteenth Century Bindery Equipment*, both done in 1975.

He decided to redo *Catalogue of Nineteenth Century Printing Presses* in 2001 after his discovery that Dave Peat had a treasure trove of loose-leaf promotional items advertising several previously unknown presses; this greatly expanded the content of the first book. Dave & Hal conspired to have me do the copying of these documents, for neither wanted to take a chance with a mere "paid working hand," who might not give such rarities the respect they deserved. Copying was done using a process camera as line shots direct to lithographic film, which later was used to print the book. This assured optimum image fidelity. Of course this brought much back-and-forth between Hal and me. By the way, the book still is available on Amazon.com.

When Hal retired from Rosenthal, he wasn't ready to leave the business world so he hit upon the idea of starting a printing supply house specifically oriented to the letterpress printer. He called his new business NA Graphics, which he ran for several years before selling it to present owner, Fritz Klinke, who is doing very well serving letterpress people today.

Probably his greatest time with APA was when he hosted the '96 Wayzgoose in Cincinnati. The featured speaker was another APA legend, Mac F. McGrew. Mac talked about his recently published "bible" of metal type, *American Metal Typefaces of the Twentieth Century*. This was a very well run meeting and among other things, we visited NA Graphics.

Like so many others, Hal and his wife Judy decided to head south to Florida for their remaining years, but in so doing, he came up with an arrangement whereby he was able to have a small printing shop near their new residence in Sarasota. He

had a great library too, and during most recent APA meetings, Hal always came with a load of books and other materials to sell off to his printing friends.

My last contact with him was in casting sorts for a case of 30 pt. Deepdene Bold Italic which he had acquired somewhere —a case which strangely had no cap A's at all. He knew the case would be useless otherwise, so he asked me to do the sorts.

It was at ATF's Piqua, Ohio, meeting that Hal made a presentation concerning a special linecaster keyboard replacement which he invented, had built and sold for several years. It converted the very unique Linotype keyboard arrangement into a typewriter QWERTY setup, which was sought especially by shops attempting to utilize non-printers in the composing room.

I noticed at that ATF meeting and also the APA Wayzgoose this year that he was having some difficulty getting around. This did not diminish his enthusiasm. I

understand he had a fall while straightening up his shop, preparing for a group visit. He died of an infection contracted during surgery to align his broken hip.

Until I read his obituary, I didn't know of Hal's earliest years in Frankfurt, Germany, and his family's fleeing of Hitler's hate-mongers during World War II. The Hal Sterne I knew was a kind, generous and loving person, soft spoken and not demanding at all.

We will miss Hal Sterne and we all extend our sincere condolences to his wife Judy, who most always was with him at our various meetings. They have five children and eight grandchildren.